

strategic coach who understands the industry and economic environment for business decisions and strategic positioning. They also need organisational coaches and mentors who can help plot the course of the organisation through its phases. Finally they need personal coaching to help with IQ, people and life skills.

The truly seasoned executive coach will be able to handle all aspects of the organisations' needs, however when you select your executive coach be very clear on what type of coaching you would like them to do and make sure they have the relevant qualifications and experience.

Developing your own

Simon Davies of Partners in Performance International (PIP) SA says as the pace of transformation in South Africa accelerates, many companies are rethinking the way their front line managers are developed. Indeed, while many organisations are reporting chronic management skills shortage, smart players are looking within and proactively up-skilling their front line managers.

The above, however, begs the question: why are people selected from the ranks of workers to become front-line managers (supervisors, foremen, etc) in the first place? The simple answer is that they are usually good workers. However, being good a worker doesn't necessarily mean an individual will be equipped to succeed in a managerial role. The fact

is that most workers obtained their managerial skills from watching their managers for a number of years. And in the past, when the pace of managerial turnover was slower, this method worked just fine.

"However, in today's fast paced world the development timeline for new managers is shrinking," points out Davies. "The old paradigm of managers learning how to manage, just by watching their bosses, doesn't necessarily apply anymore.

"Companies that actively develop the skills of front line management are the ones that are likely to be successful in the new South African business environment. Often newly appointed managers receive development training, which is undoubtedly helpful. However, there is a world of difference between training and coaching. Imagine being expected to learn how to drive a car simply from classroom training – the same principal applies to new managers."

Front line coaching is about teaching managers to observe the dynamics of their workplace while also providing them with the tools and confidence to review and influence team performance as the work day progresses. Indeed, it is about empowering the individual to make those knowledge-based, minute by minute decisions that make the difference between average and outstanding team performance. Results of 10% to 20 % improvement in productivity are not uncommon, so it's easy to see how front line coaching can very often offer return on investment while also adding to the skills base of South Africa's next generation of managers.

Support through mentoring

Assuming that leaders and managers can automatically be mentors is a mistake that could cost South African business dearly according to Elaine Rumboll, Director of Executive Education at the UCT Graduate School of Business. "The dictionary definition of a mentor describes 'an experienced and trusted advisor', and for many the word conjures up an image of an older, wiser person passing on age-old secrets. Indeed, the tradition of mentoring as a means of imparting knowledge has been around since ancient times."

But in the modern world, specifically the contemporary business environment, mentoring has evolved from a one-way flow of knowledge to a two-way exchange of ideas and information, she says.

Nowadays, the mentor in a work situation may well be older or more experienced than his or her mentee – but what is more important than simply transferring facts and figures to a colleague is the ability to build and maintain an effective relationship, one which can ultimately have a major impact on the bottom line in a business.

"Mentoring is about developing the capacity to hold effective conversations, and learning how to listen," points out Janine Everson, Senior Lecturer and Academic Director at the Centre for Coaching at the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB). Everson points out that mentoring has become an accepted part of a competent leader's armoury. The ability to provide expert advice, to take key staff under one's wing and offer guidance, and to be a role model is expected from people in senior positions in the contemporary business environment.



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